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UPON RED-TAPE.

THE redness of red-tape is itself a specimen of red-tapeism. Why should not a tribe of original lawyers and politicians arise who would 'burst the bonds of use and wont' and tie up their bundles in green or blue or yellow? But we pass on from that trivial inquiry to the consideration of the essence of red-tape; and we find it consists in the distribution of papers into ticketed parcels, each parcel being a distinct business. So far good. We see the spirit of order at work, and no man of affairs can laugh at the spirit of order. But when the spirit of order, having arranged his bundles, proceeds in a carnally lazy way to go to sleep upon them, then we are entitled to begin our gibes. 'Order is heaven's first law,' and the initial arrangement of papers into bundles and pigeon-holes gives a whiff of celestial air. But it is disgraceful to tie up our souls in the same bundles and put our faculties into pigeon-holes.

'Freddy, my dear, come and let me see whether you have learned your alphabet.—What is the first letter?'

'A, mamma.'

'And the next?'

'I tell you what, mamma! Let's call all the others A.'

The alpha of business is orderly arrangement. It is a bower adorned with red-tape; but we must not linger there; beta awaits us, gamma calls us, delta beckons us; we may not rest till we have planted our alpenstock on omega.

'Well begun is half-done,' says an old motto; but it is only true when the spirit of progress sits on the box-seat of the *Well-begun* coach. It is well to disturb the fatuous satisfaction with which we or others contemplate the first step of a right course, the stage of red-tape, the stage of bundles and pigeon-holes. For it is indubitable that reasonable contentment with ourselves upon taking that stage soon passes into somnolence. Some people's consciences are like cats; as soon as they are stroked the right way, they purr and—go to sleep.

The second form of the disease is a multiplication of the bundle and pigeon-hole system, a dread of free action, and a passion for routine. The elementary cell becomes a cellular structure. Pigeon-holes open out into pigeon-holes, like the 'Maze' puzzles that please children, and the rules of the game must be observed. To get to the heart of the maze you must find the clue; and to break through a wall or jump over it is treason. The aged monarch is burned to death whilst the order to pull him out of the fire is passed downward through the inverted hierarchy of servants.

A luxuriant example of this form of red-tape was exhibited by Captain Vivian to the admiring House of Commons some years ago in Committee on the Army Estimates. The initial fact was the need of a pair of bellows in the Curragh Camp. After a preliminary whetting of the appetite of the red-tape dragon by a lengthy correspondence, the operation of getting this pair of bellows proceeded as follows:

February 12.—War Department gives authority to the local commissariat officer to indent [that is, give an order] on the Royal Engineer Department for a pair of bellows.

Same date.—Local commissariat officer applies to district engineer officer for a pair of bellows.

Feb. 16.—District engineer officer applies to military store officer at Dublin.

Feb. 19.—Military store officer informs royal engineer officer at Dublin that he can supply the bellows on requisition.

Feb. 20.—Royal engineer officer at Dublin forwards this information to royal engineer officer at the Curragh.

Feb. 21.—Local engineer officer at the Curragh informs royal engineer officer at Dublin that he has no form of requisition.

Feb. 22.—Local engineer officer at the Curragh asks the local commissariat officer if the proposed bellows would do.

Feb. 23.—Local commissariat officer replies 'Yes.'

Feb. 24.—Local engineer officer informs local commissariat officer that he must apply to the

royal engineer officer, Dublin; and application is made accordingly.

Feb. 26.—Military stores officer at Dublin answers that he will supply the bellows on an order from the War Office.

Feb. 28.—Local commissariat officer produces authority from the War Office and reads it to local engineer officer.

March 1.—District royal engineer officer declines to have anything to do with a service not brought to his notice through the proper authority; and local commissariat officer refers matter to commissariat officer in Dublin.

March 2.—Commissariat officer in Dublin relegates the question to the deputy quartermaster-general, Dublin.

March 3.—Deputy quartermaster-general passes on the requisition to quartermaster-general, Horse-guards.

March 5.—Horse-guards refer to War Office, and War Office refers to commissariat-general-in-chief, London.

March 10.—Commissariat-general-in-chief asks director of stores to give authority; director of stores states that the commissariat officer should include the bellows in the annual estimate; and commissariat-general-in-chief writes to the Horse-guards and to the commissariat officer, Dublin.

March 20.—Commissariat officer at the Curragh writes to know why he does not get his bellows.

Whether he ever did get them, we do not know; but it ought to be some satisfaction to him to know that his need of a pair of bellows engendered a morbid growth of red-tape, which, for complexity and extent of diseased cellular structure, can hardly be surpassed in the bottles of any surgical museum. It is a beautiful case, and being a military specimen, it reminds us of that early piece of intricacy set by Gordius, king of Phrygia, to Alexander, and which was so hastily marred by the conqueror's sword. Masterful natures are apt to make short work of red-tape entanglements.

Another variety of the red-tape disease consists in words, phrases, functions, and ceremonial observances out of which the spirit has fled, or the understanding, or both. Our ordinary social life is largely built on structures of this material, as cities stand on vast thicknesses of chalk composed of the deserted habitations of countless myriads of tiny creatures long deceased. Our words are sepulchres. We cannot name the days of the week, or 'consider the heavens,' or buy an ounce of spirit of camphor, without treading on the graves of thoughts. But in such cases all the offensiveness of decay is gone, and the gentle wash of the tides of Time during many centuries has converted the products of decay into a pure and beneficent substance. But a nearer approach to the dissolution of thought and the giving up of the ghost by words is not so agreeable. A Hampshire vicar assured his readers some years ago that the well-known marriage service of the Church of England as uttered by his brides and bridegrooms exhibited curious deterioration. One of the sentences which Edwin has to utter was quite commonly rendered thus: 'With my body I thee wash up, and with all my worldly goods I thee and thou;' which was matched, and even exceeded, by Emma's variations of her part, in promising to

take her husband 'to 'ave and to 'old from this day forth, for betterer horse, for richerer power, in siggerness else, to love cherries and a bay.'

Edwin and Emma knew they were being married, and that this marvellous coil of red-tape was somehow a necessary part of the function; but the attempt to explain how and why would have smitten them with paralysis. The distorted sentences, texts, hymns, thus repeated by thousands of good and simple souls daily would stagger us if statistics could be obtained.

Child-piety is a beautiful and simple thing, and is often in danger of being throttled by red-tape; but generally is lissome and buoyant enough to escape. In what sweet freedom of all meaning the scallop of a child's soul will dance over a sea of words, neither knowing nor caring for the profundities below. We confess it more frequently moves us to laughter than to grief, knowing that the real spring of child-piety does not lie in those twilight depths where swim the solemn shadowy forms of the Fathers, the Divines, the Scholasts, and the Commentators. Captivating specimens might easily be given as illustrations, but collections of them are so frequently going the round of the press that it is scarcely worth while. That it is not children only who are ready to gabble words without meaning, if they are supposed to be part of a function, was finely shown by the parish clerk's version of a notice entrusted to him by his minister. The notice was this: 'On Sunday next the service in this church will be held in the afternoon, and on the following Sunday in the morning, and so on alternately until further notice.' What really greeted the ears of the congregation was this version of the minister's message: 'On Sunday next the morning service in this church will be held in the afternoon; and on the following Sunday, the afternoon service will be held in the morning, and so on to all eternity.' The children may now make their bow to the parish clerk, and present to him the fool's cap with festoons of red-tape.

We conclude with that variety of red-tapeism which consists in the conservation of decrees, orders, customs, ceremonies, from which the *raison d'être* has perished, as the snails out of the dry snail-shells that roll about chalk downs. Even the dog is subject to this complaint when he turns round three times before lying down because his ancestors did so to make a bed in the long prairie-grass. 'Leave your stick, sir,' said a doorkeeper to a gentleman who was passing into an Exhibition.—'But I haven't got a stick,' the visitor replied.—'Then you must go and buy one; the orders is as every gentleman is to leave his stick.' The well-known instances of the two Russian sentinels are in point here. One stood at the entrance of a passage and cried, 'Keep to the left!' the other mounted guard in the middle of a grass plot. The origin of the first regulation was traced back, through a generation, to an occasion when the right wall of the passage had been painted; and the second sentinel quite unconsciously commemorated the advent, in a previous century, of an unexpected little snow-drop which charmed the Empress of that day, and was ordered to be guarded.

How stupid people can be if they try was illustrated by a circumstance mentioned to the

writer by a superintendent town missionary. He asked an army chaplain whether he ever spoke to the soldiers privately about their souls.—'No,'—'Why?'—'Because a chaplain is an officer, and the rule of the service is that an officer cannot speak to a private soldier except in the presence of a non-commissioned officer.'

What has Nature to teach us about red-tape? Well, having vilipended red-tape through all the foregoing article, we will admit that it has the merits of its defects. It has its uses. Bonds and freedom, steadfastness and progress, constitute a see-saw which we shall never wholly escape, and which has its analogy in the physical world. Automatic action is Nature's red-tape, and we should creep along very slowly without it. A series of voluntary actions result in automatic action, and automatic action is an economy of brain-power. It does occasionally happen that the reason, the final cause, of the action evaporates; but the action being automatic, is continued. This is Nature's red-tape. But she forthwith sets about the correction of the useless function, as the history of the divergence of species proves. It is reserved for man to perpetrate the absurdities and the costly vagaries of offices, sinecures, dresses, customs, from which all use and meaning have perished as wholly as the pious sentiment, 'God encompasses us,' has perished out of the sign of a metropolitan hotel known as the *Goat and Compasses*.

It is clearly the duty of Society to return dead things to dust as soon as possible, and not to bury them in oak coffins, resisting the kindly influences that make for dissolution. Life, we are told, is the sum of the influences that resist dissolution; there is therefore some life in red-tape, but it is not a wholesome life. Where a creed or custom is dead, call in the burying-beetles, and let them forthwith undermine it and inter it. It is dreadful that a thing be kept alive by red-tape after it is dead, like that wretched man in Poe's tale who was mesmerised in *articulo mortis*, and, when at last released, fell into the crumbling relics of a death of long-ago. We do not advocate cremation. There are always some devotees whose feelings would be harrowed by the visible smoke and flame; but do not deliberately obstruct dissolution. 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes.' It is only worthless creatures like subscribers to magazines or newspapers who promise to pay up 'next Tuesday week if they are alive,' and, failing to fulfil their promise, must be dead, but are subsequently seen walking about, to save funeral expenses.

JOHN VALE'S GUARDIAN.

CHAPTER XXIX.

We must go back a step or two to find out exactly what had happened. Isaiah in his new-found prosperity was not unmindful of old acquaintances. Motives were mixed with Isaiah, as they are with most people, and though he would never have dropped the Vignes under any conditions while circumstances put them within his reach, he was all the better pleased and the more willing to visit them when he could drive to their door in a two-horse brake of his own, and could pre-

sent himself before them stiff and shining in unaccustomed broadcloth.

The Vignes had gone to live, as necessity bade them, near the great establishment in which Monsieur had found employment. It was a grimy, dirty, and smoke-darkened district, and as little like their last abiding-place as it well could be. They were placed in the centre of a straggling street a mile long or thereabouts, where every here and there an unkempt field broke the line of houses, and left open to the eye an expanse of country dotted with pit-stacks and heaped with mounds of refuse. The mud of the street was black with coal-dust, the very brickwork of the houses was sodden with old smoke. Day and night, and winter and summer, a pall of smoke hung over the land, and a feeble haze of blue was a midsummer day's dream.

Vigne went to his new employment with excellent testimonials, and made better money there than he had ever earned before, so that the ugliness of his surroundings was not without compensation. He was in the midst of a French colony, too, and in that portion of the street in which he lived his native language was more commonly to be heard than English. Madame had taken upon herself the household arrangements, and had created a cheerful home over an undertaker's shop. Thither, on the afternoon on which Snelling sat waiting in the hovel at the top of that disastrous shaft of his, drove Isaiah, in the brand-new brake and the brand-new raiment behind the pair of horses, not too well assorted in point of size, colour, or style, but glorious to their owner's eyes. The undertaker received Isaiah with respect, and sent out a boy to lead the equipage up and down, to prevent the horses from catching cold, whilst the visitor mounted to Madame Vigne's apartments. The good lady, who was already attired as if for a journey, gave Isaiah a cordial welcome.

'I shall ask you one thing, Mr Vintare,' she said, laying a hand on each broadclothed shoulder. 'I have seen Achilles, and he has told me that to get to your new house you can pass by my boy. The road is only a little longer. Do, please, pass by my boy. I will not trouble you more than that. I will not want to see him or to speak to him; but let me go by where he lives. That shall content me altogether, because when I think of him he will not any longer be in no place. I shall have a place to put him in when he comes into my mind. He is often in my mind,' said the good creature, emotionally, 'for Anatole and I we have no children.'

'All right, mum,' responded Isaiah. 'It's only two or three hundred yards out of the way, and with a pair o' steppers like them, two or three hundred yards ain't much. Come and look at 'em.' He waved Madame to the window, and pointed a finger towards the muddy street. 'Look at that brace o' steppers, mum; ain't they prime?'

Madame, who had no notion as to what Isaiah was pointing at, lifted her eyebrows and laid the palms of her hands together in pure complaisance.

'I bought that pair of hosses, mum,' said Isaiah, 'for sixty-five guineas, money down, and throwed in a very old dogcart as the hoss-dealer took a fancy to. Call it seventy pound, and tell me it's a bargain; and if you can't say so in your heart of hearts, you're no judge of hoss-flesh.'

Madame being thus enlightened as to the identity of the pair of steppers, acknowledged their excellence volubly with her hands in the air. 'Ah, Mr Vintare, you have prospered.'

'Yes, I have, mum,' said Isaiah. 'And I'm humbly and respectfully thankful for it.'

'You will not forget my boy because you are rich?' she said, searching for a handkerchief to wipe her eyes.

'I don't think he'll grow up to forget me,' Isaiah answered. 'He'll be one of the richest men for miles and miles round before he's one-and-twenty. I shall have no temptation to forget Master John. Apart from which, I've got a kindness for him.'

'Oho!' said Madame, with her hands in the air again, 'you nice, dear, stupid, English people, who will sooner die than say you love anything. Come along to the pair of steppers; I am quite ready.'

Isaiah opened the door and led the way downstairs into the street. Two or three dozen slatternly women with babies had come out to see the show, and looked on whilst Madame mounted and bestowed about herself the plenteous supply of rugs with which the vehicle was provided. Isaiah assumed the reins, gave a crack of the whip, and drove away.

The purpose of his visit to Madame Vigne was to introduce that excellent person to his wife. Mrs Winter had heard much from her husband of Madame's virtues, and was, as a natural consequence, rather ill disposed to her. She had on several occasions flatly declined to encounter Madame; but had, unfortunately for herself, based her sole objection on the ground that the lady was a foreignneering Papist. This figment having been dissipated by the vicar, whose authority was of course beyond dispute, Mrs Winter was left without defences, and was compelled, though sorely against her will, to accept the visit.

She had her compensations in the fact that she was by this time inhabiting a house which by its splendours could do little less than crush the female invader who ventured on her territory. Isaiah had always been a solid man, and within his own limits was intensely respectable, so that when his circumstances enabled him to do justice to his own conceptions, he furnished his house in a solid and intensely respectable way. He bought the stickiest and shiniest mahogany to be had for love or money, and had it upholstered in the stiffest and most uncompromising horse-hair, a stuff that would be glacial even in the summer-time, and penitential all the year round. The carpets and wall-papers were of the brightest patterns. There was a chest of drawers of brass-fitted mahogany in every room of the house; and in the drawing-room there was a rosewood pianoforte with a surface like that of court-plaster. Nobody in the house could play upon it, and that, considering the internal quality of the instrument, was perhaps rather a blessing than otherwise. Everything was rigidly and exquisitely uncomfortable, and Mrs Winter and her husband were proud in proportion to the distress their new surroundings gave them.

'You will not forget,' said Madame, belying a finger on Isaiah's arm when they were once clear of houses and had come upon the open country—'you will not forget to pass my boy's house?'

'No,' said Isaiah; 'I shan't forget. As a matter of fact, I've never done it yet, because I don't want to look like bragging over him. He gien me the sack only a few months ago, and here I be as well to do as he is, or anyhow as well to do as I want. I've had good-luck, and he's had bad; and if I was to drive by him too often with a turn-out like this, he might tek it into his head as I was bouncing.—I don't care,' pursued Isaiah, with a defiant crack of the whip, 'what Bob Snelling teks it into his head to think about me; but I'll tek care, and jolly good care too, as he has no right to it.'

The afternoon shadows were growing deep already as they bowled along the smooth and well-kept country road. 'We're comin' to it,' said Isaiah in a while. 'It's the next house round the corner on the right-hand side. I'll slow down a bit, so as you can get a good look at it. Master John won't be at home yet a while, because the gaffer's sent him to school in Birmingham. He goes to the Grammar-school there, and wears a mortar-board atop of his head, like a parson. It's half-past five before he's at home, because he has to catch the train, and it's a mile from here to the railway station.—Look there; that's his bedroom.—No; not up-stairs; on the ground-floor. I used to sleep i' the same room afore Bob Snelling gien me the sack.—He thought,' said Isaiah, lowering his voice, 'that he was going to hurt me when he did that; but if he'd never done it, it might ha' been many and many a bright thousand in his pocket.'

Isaiah's new house was within half a mile of Farmer Shorthouse's residence. Tea was laid out in lonely splendour in the arctic parlour, which even the generous coal-fire could not warm. But if it failed in that direction, it succeeded admirably in another, and brought out the odours of French-polish to perfection. Mrs Winter was pilloried in a stiff black silk, and was on such terms of ceremony with her visitor that no overtures of foreign good-nature could make a passage beyond her intrenchments. Isaiah nudged, frowned, and nodded, and once or twice offered a stage direction in a stage whisper: 'Brisk up a little bit, missus; don't spread the company-manner too thick.'

Madame's visit under these conditions was not likely to be prolonged. The hostess's best approach to geniality was made when she appraised the furniture. 'We warn't brought up to it,' she explained to her guest; 'and I doubt whether Providence will tek it kindly. I've no mind for show myself; but our Isaiah is a man as'll have his way anywheres, and allays would. It's his doings, and I humbly hope as worldly pride may not have a fall.'

'My boy will be at home by this time,' said Madame, when the chilling function was once more seated in the brake behind Isaiah. 'Let me see the house while he is in it; it will be more home-like then.'

Isaiah, anxious to atone for the cold magnificence of Madame's reception, assented willingly. 'It's pitch-dark now,' he answered, 'and the gaffer can think nothing of my driving by.'

A thin snow was in the air, and Madame Vigne veiled herself from it until Isaiah pulled his horses to a walk and touched her with the butt

of his whip. 'Theer,' he said—'theer's a light in his window.—Why, theer's Master John his very self!—Look! D'ye see him? He's pulling up the window.'

In effect Master John was there, in a glow of lamplight. He wore the college cap of which Isaiah had spoken, and a broad white collar over his jacket, and looked remarkably trim and healthy. He had opened the window, and had laid a hand on each of the outer shutters, when Madame called out to him: 'John, my dear!'

'Who's there?' he asked, peering into the darkness. The lamp of the brake gleamed redly through the winter mist, but he could see nothing beyond.

'You know me,' said Madame in an eager whisper. 'Come for a moment. Give me one kiss, and I will go.'

John climbed out at the casement, drew down the window, closed the shutters from without, and ran on tiptoe into the road. A minute later, he had climbed into the brake, and they were hugging each other to their hearts' content.

'Where are you going, Isaiah?' John asked in a hushed and cautious voice.

'I'm driving her home,' said Isaiah, with a jerk of his elbow to intimate Madame. 'It's rather better than five mile.'

'You'll drive back again, won't you?' said John. 'It won't take much more than an hour to do it with those horses. Uncle isn't at home, and he wouldn't mind much if he were. Let me go with you.'

Madame hugged him anew for the suggestion, and immediately began to pack her rugs about him. Isaiah, well pleased, whipped up the horses; and away they all three rolled together, Madame, prodigal of affection, with a fat and comfortable arm round her protégé's neck.

All this time, Mr Orme, sitting neglected and alone in the back kitchen, awaited Snelling's return. Once or twice the housekeeper passed through and treated him to an indignant sniff, at which the meek Tobias curled one foot round the other, and set his thumbs twirling in a feeble appeal against her judgment. She obeyed her master's orders, and set a copious jug of table beer and a joint of cold meat before the visitor. The plentiful good cheer and the fire atoned for ennui for an hour or two; but after a time, Tobias began to weary. The hours of waiting dragged more and more as the day went on, and he began to think himself altogether forgotten. Somewhere about three or four o'clock in the afternoon he fell asleep and allowed the fire to go out. When he awoke the room was dark as pitch, and he was chilled to the marrow. For the first minute or two he failed to remember where he was, and went groping about in some terror before he identified his surroundings. Even when he had done so, he had insane fears lest he had somehow been decoyed into confinement and left to perish.

In the course of his gropings he came upon the handle of the door, and found, to his relief, that there was at least no obstacle of escape. The house was silent as the grave; but the stillness hummed in his ears with a dreadful and disturbing noise. The door he had opened led upon a corridor which ran the whole length of the rear of the house. At the far end of this corridor

shone two distinct rays of light, one beaming apparently through a keyhole, and the other through a crack between the matted flooring and the bottom of a door. Tobias, with stealthy footstep and hands outstretched on either side, approached these friendly signs and listened. There was not a sound of life within; but he saw that the door was off the latch.

'If you please,' he murmured, and tapped humbly with a single knuckle. There came no response in answer, and he tapped again. Then he thought he heard within the murmur of a voice whispering in a peculiarly level and monotonous tone. He tapped rather more loudly than before and coughed apologetically. Still there was no answer, and he ventured to push the door a little wider and again to signalise his presence by a cough. A little scared by the continued silence, he pushed the door a trifle wider yet, and slowly and with extreme caution, guiding that fiery nose of his across the lintel, he peeped into the room. Not a soul was there; but, to his surprise, the sound of the level and monotonous whisper still went on. After a moment's wonder, he traced this noise to the lamp, which kept up an unintermittent hissing as it burned. Tobias's nerves had never been of the best this thirty years, and he was shaken now by unusual privations, so that if his heart began to flutter and his blood to twitch and sting at the remote suggestion of a fiery serpent, there was nothing in the world for him to wonder at. A keen, swift travelling wind from some open door was wafted by him, and in a second the fiery serpent flashed into a fiery dragon. In fine, the lamp burst with a hideous shock of noise, and after a second's darkness, the whole room was ablaze with burning oil.

The most hopeful of men could not have expected Tobias to cover one half so quickly as he did the ground he passed in his retreat. How he found himself in the open air he never knew; but he was at some considerable distance from the house when his hazy wits returned to him. He looked in the direction in which he supposed it to lie, and could discern nothing in the darkness; but as he stood, he heard scream on scream, as if from within the house; and a second later, the same voice calling 'Fire!' in the open air. There were distant shouts in answer; and shortly afterwards a dull glow spread like a red blot upon the blackness of the night, and died away again. It spread itself abroad once more, and grew, second by second, more vivid. Sudden jets and lances of light began to dash through the red blot hither and thither; and in the intervals of the screaming voice he heard distinctly the crackle of burning wood. Then something which he judged to be the chamber window went with a loud crash and the night was alive with fire. The house was three hundred years old, oak wainscoted, and as dry as tinder.

Tobias turned and ran for dear life, not knowing in what direction he was going.

John and Isaiah had seen Madame safe home, and were returning. They were within a mile of the house, when they came easily to the top of a gentle rise, from which a large extent of country was visible in the daytime.

'I'll get down here, Isaiah,' said John; 'I can

get home in ten minutes, and you can go the nearer way. I don't want uncle to know that we have been together.'

'Hillo!' cried Isaiah suddenly, 'what's that?—That'll be a rick afire.—No; it ain't! There's a window. Look! That's the flash of a window. There it is again! Send I may live, if it ain't Bob Snelling's house!' He dragged John back into the vehicle, and flogged his horses to a furious pace. 'I can tell him as I give you a lift,' he shouted to John, ' afore I saw the fire. He can find no harm in that at such a moment.'

Three or four minutes found them in front of the burning house. The housekeeper was in hysterics in the lane, and one or two women from the neighbouring cottages had taken charge of her. Some half-a-dozen loungers in smock-frocks stood about smoking and staring at the fire.

'Where's the gaffer?' roared Isaiah.

'Sam Duke's rode off to fetch him,' one of the loungers answered. 'He's been at the new shaft all day long.'

'Well,' cried Isaiah angrily, 'can't none of you do anything? Isn't there one of you as has got the brains to know as fire don't like water?' He dismounted as he spoke, and marching his team to a field-gate at a little distance, tethered the horses there by the reins and came bustling back again. 'Lend a hand here, lads! There's summat to be done, summat to be saved.'

'What's the use on it, Mr Winter?' one elderly labourer asked him. 'The well's fifty foot deep. It teks two minutes to get a single bucket up.'

Isaiah stared at him for an instant and then nodded. 'It's a pity,' he said sadly, 'to see the old place burn; but that's all there is for it, I reckon.—My blessid!' he cried suddenly, 'there's the books!' Before a man could divine his intention or a hand could be stretched out to arrest him, he was half-way up the path towards the door of the burning house, shielding his face from the fierce heat with both arms as he ran. The door was volleying a red smoke, and he disappeared in the midst of it. John dashed after him with a cry, and stood powerless with fear at the gateway. There was an awful pause, and in the middle of it Snelling rode up with the messenger behind him. He saw young John standing at the gate, and he noticed that no man had an eye for him. Everybody was staring with fixed and breathless interest towards the door; and as he followed the general gaze, a figure came plunging through the volleying smoke and staggered down the pathway.

The handful of onlookers raised a husky cheer; and Isaiah, clinging to the gate, gave himself over to an heroic fit of coughing and sneezing.

'What's this?' demanded Snelling in a tone of wonder. 'What brought him there?'

'That's thee, is it, old un?' said Isaiah, recognising the voice and looking up with streaming eyes. 'I just happened to be passing. They told me you wasn't within call, and I happened to bethink myself of the books, so I just went in and fetched 'em. Here's the deed-box and cash-box into the bargain.'

Snelling dismounted slowly. 'I was a bit of a fool, I reckon,' he said, 'when I quarrelled with a man like thee.'

'Sayest?' said Isaiah, holding out his hand.

He had risked his life to serve the man, and that meant death to malice.

Snelling took the proffered hand and wrung it hard.

'It was a lamp burst in your neveu's bedroom, so they sayin', Mr Snelling,' said one of the bystanders.

'Ay, ay!' he answered; 'so I'm told.'

The boy was there still, and he himself was houseless by his own vile handiwork.

ROSE LEGENDS.

THAT the rose is queen among the flowers there can be no shadow of doubt, if we consider the amount of attention it has received in the past, and especially of late years. From the traditional period when, quite thornless,

High in Paradise,

By the four rivers, the first roses blew,

to the last exhibition of the National Rose Society, it has been in favour, and it now reigns supreme as crowned Empress of the fairest State in all the world. Whether it be the wild-brier of the simplest sort, as it luxuriates in the hedgerow; whether it be a more favoured variety revelling on some southern wall, and doing so with careless ease; or whether it be of the foreign kind, that after years of care doth 'down the alleys shine afar': in either case, all less endowed or less attended blooms serve as accessories to lend the beauty of completeness to the scene.

Now the rose has some 'virtue to boast,' as Dr Watts put it, 'above all the flowers of the field,' or it could not have found so large a space in early legends as it has done. Saints Ambrose and Basil inform us that it had no drawback from its virtues in Eden; and Milton, following in their wake, describes the garden as being stored with

Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose.

Harpocrates, the secret-keeper, was bribed to silence with a rose; and Robert Browning had in his mind the legend when, in *Isobel's Child*, he used the phrase, 'Red as a rose of Harpocrate.' If, however, Sir John Mandeville were an authority on this matter of colour, the redness had a much later origin than the time of Harpocrates, for the author of the *Voiage and Traivaille* tells us that a Jewish maid of Bethlehem was beloved by a man named Hamuel, a brutish sot. She rejected his suit; and he, in revenge, accused the maiden of offences for which she was condemned to be burned alive. She was brought to the stake; but, by a miracle, the flames burned her accuser to a cinder, and did her no harm. The fagots by which she was surrounded became a garden of roses, the burning brands becoming red ones, and those that were not kindled becoming white ones.

Quite a different origin is given for the colour of the yellow variety. Mussulman tradition accounts for it in a very simple way. It says that when Mohammed was journeying from earth to Paradise, the drops of sweat which fell on the earth from the forehead of the Prophet became white roses; but that the drops of sweat which fell from Al Borak, the animal

on which he rode, became yellow roses. We must not lay much stress upon the tradition, for yellow roses did not come even from the land of the Prophet of Islam, but from Germany. Historic doubts, however, apart, it is pleasant to be told that this flower was sacred to Eros and Aphrodite, to Cupid and Venus, and was an emblem not only of joy and love, but a symbol also of prudence.

The doubtfulness of legend in this matter is of small moment when we come to consider that the rose has a history which goes a long way farther back than some of the traditions themselves. It was well known to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Herodotus, for instance, writes of roses in the garden of Midas, the son of Gordius, in Phrygia, that had sixty leaves, which grew of themselves, and had a more agreeable fragrance than all the rest. The Centifolia is said to have been existent with the Greeks, and a great favourite, not only for its beauty of form but also for its perfume. At feasts, the roses were lavishly used by both the Greeks and the Romans. Fabulous sums were spent to have them at all seasons. In the time of the Republic, the people had their cups of Falernian wine swimming with blooms; and the Spartan soldiers after the battle of Cirrha refused to drink any wine that was not perfumed with roses; while at the Regatta of Baia, the whole surface of the Lucrine lake was strewn with the flowers. Nero at his banquetings showered rose-water upon his guests from a hole in the ceiling; and when he honoured the house of a noble with his presence, the host was compelled to have his fountains playing rose-water. Indeed, on such occasions the ground was covered with rose-leaves, garlands of the flowers decorated the brows and necks of the guests, and a rose-pudding found a place in the repast itself. The Sybarites slept on beds stuffed with rose-leaves; the tyrant Dionysius had his couch filled with them; Verus would travel with a garland on his head and round his neck, and over his litter he had a thin net with rose-leaves intertwined. Antiochus luxuriated upon a bed of blooms even in winter days and nights; and when Cleopatra entertained Antony, she had roses covering the floor to the depth, it is said, of an ell. We are told that Heliogabalus supplied so many at one of his banquets that several of his guests were suffocated in the endeavour to extricate themselves from the abundance; he drank rose-wine to help digestion; he bathed in the same sort of liquid; and he had the public swimming-baths filled with the wine of the rose. No wonder the ancients became unwell after breathing and eating and drinking and wearing and reclining on and walking over the fragrant flowers. But the worst of it was that when they became ill, they were given a rose-draught; and no matter what the ailment was, the same thing was prescribed in some form or other. Oftener than not, the poor patient would succumb under the delicious treatment, and he would cease from living in consequence of a ruined digestion arising from a surfeit of sweets,

Or quick effluvia darting through the brain,
Die of a rose in aromatic pain.

Doubtless, the immoderate use of roses by the ancients led in after-days to their being relegated

to their proper sphere in the garden; for although we have had the Wars of the Roses in our modern times, the flowers were only plucked as a symbol. Now, in the garden the rose is about as much at home as it is in poetry. In the garden, there is nothing more charming than the rose in bloom; and in poetry there is no poet worthy of the name who has not consecrated it and enshrined it in his verse. How charmingly this has been done! Let the author of the *Lady of the Lake* speak for them all when he says:

The rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,
And hope is brightest when it dawns from fears;
The rose is sweetest washed with morning dew,
And love is loveliest when embalmed in tears.
O wilding rose, whom fancy thus endears,
I bid your blossoms in my bonnet wave,
Emblem of hope and love through future years!

But the rose is really useful as well as beautiful, despite its misemployment by the ancients, and notwithstanding the artificial character of the course of its development. John Brown of Haddington, a century and a quarter ago, said: 'Roses in general are delightful to view, agreeable in their smell, and useful in medicine;' and he states that, according to Tournefort, there were fifty-three kinds in his day. The medicinal qualities of the fruit of the rose are well known, for it has time out of mind been considered as an astringent; and Wiseman in his *Surgery* recommends 'fountain-water with rose-water and sugar of roses' as a cooling draught. Rose-vinegar is used for toilet and other purposes, and the conserve of the flowers is held in high esteem as a confection. The chief employment of the bloom, however, is in the manufacture of rose-water and otto of roses.

Rose-water is extensively made in India. At Ghazipore, in Bengal, there are hundreds of acres laid out for the purpose. The harvest is in March and April; and the result of the distillation is to supply about one quart of rose-water from each thousand of the blooms; but adulteration is very much resorted to, oil of sandal-wood being the medium; and the people of India do not seem to mind much whether they get the odour of the rose or the sandal for their money. It is comparatively cheap where it is made, costing two or three shillings a quart, even when unadulterated.

Otto or attar of roses is much more important and expensive. The origin of this condensed perfume is told in one of the romantic stories of the East. It is said that Noorjehan Begum, the favourite wife of Jehan-Geer, was walking in her garden, through which ran a stream of rose-water, when she noticed some oily particles floating on the surface. She had them skimmed off; and their aroma was found to be so delicious, that means were devised to produce the precious essence in a more regular way. The method is an extension of that which is used to produce rose-water, but it takes a thousand trees to supply about two ounces of attar, and its value is seldom less than twenty pounds sterling. At that price, and unadulterated, it is sold mainly to Europeans, while in a less pure form it is vended in the native bazaars. It is bought by the Westerns, however, for manufacturing purposes, and not to be used in its pure condition. Thus, Pereira, in his *Elements of Materia Medica and Therapeutics*, declares that 'attar of roses is employed

for scenting only. In the shops, various fumes are sold which owe their odour to the attar. Thus, oil for the hair, sold as *huile antique rouge à la rose*, is merely olive oil coloured by alkanet and scented with the attar. Milk of roses also contains the attar. Several compound scents owe a portion of their fragrance to this oil, as lavender water.' So that Tom Moore, though not literally, was largely correct when he affirmed in his 'Twopenny Post-bag' that

Otto of roses,
Refreshing all noses,
Shall sweetly exhale from our whiskers and wigs.

Extensive rose-farms exist in Turkey, at Adrianople, Brusa, Ushak, and the low countries of the Balkan generally. In the last-mentioned district, seventy thousand ounces of attar are said to be produced in each season, and there it takes two thousand flowers to the drachm! Indeed, the queen of flowers is found in all the temperate parts of the earth, and even in the far north, and it will grow almost anywhere with a little needful care; but those of Cashmere surpass all others for beauty and fragrance. Our roses are bright, and there are roses of other lands which are claimed to be brighter, as, for instance, those of France and Damascus; yet

Who has not heard of the vale of Cashmere,
With its roses the brightest that earth ever gave?

UNDER AN AFRIC SUN.

CHAPTER III.

'YES, my dear sirs, I cannot conceive a more delightful climate. Winter is unknown, and you can suit your taste by selecting the heat you prefer. Africa down by the sea-shore; Italy where you stand; a few hundred feet higher in the mountains, France; then England; and Norway and its snows at the top of the volcano. A man ought to be happy here.'

'And you are not?' said Fraser dryly.

'No, and yes. Of course, I'm happy in my garden with my child, but— There, hang it all, my dear boys!' he cried, in a good-humoured angry tone, 'how can a man be happy with a load of debt?'

Digby listened, but his eyes were directed to the garden.

'Yes,' continued Redgrave; 'I've been so profoundly unlucky. Too speculative, perhaps; but I came out here twenty years ago as a speculation, and I'm a stubborn Sussex man, sir: I will not be beaten. But I've got hold of the right thing at last.'

'And what's that?'

'Sulphur, sir. I'm working up that at the top of the mountain. You shall see the place, if you'll come.—Ah, here's Nelly. We never ventured to import a piano, gentlemen; but we have a guitar, and I'll be bound to say if we petition rightly, we shall get a song.'

'Do you wish me to sing, father?' said the girl, colouring slightly as she met Digby's earnest gaze.

'Yes, my dear, if you are not too tired.'

'Oh no,' she said hastily; and she crossed the room to reach down a guitar hanging by its ribbon from a nail in the wall.

The two Englishmen had been a fortnight in Isola, and, attractive as the place had proved with its wondrous vegetation, gorge, hill, and crater, Redgrave's pretty half-English villa seemed to be the spot which drew them to it again and again. The days would be passed in penetrating the most out-of-the-way parts of the island and adding to Fraser's collection; then they would return, tired out, to the little *venta*, where their dark-eyed moustached landlady had prepared a substantial meal; after which there would be chocolate and a cigar, followed by: 'I say, Horace, what do you say to a walk up to Redgrave's? He will not see much English society when we are gone.'

Fraser always looked uneasy, hesitated, and seemed on the point of refusing; but he invariably ended by rising to go, till it became almost a matter of course for them to find father and daughter standing by the rough gate between the prickly-pears, Redgrave smoking one of his home-made cigars, and Helen watching with a sadness of expression in her eyes which seemed to grow night by night.

Then there would be more chocolate out there, in the delicious evening, with the scent of orange blossom floating around, and the boom of the great Atlantic billows, softened by the distance, coming up like a bass murmur from far below.

Delicious dreamy evenings, with sea, sky, and shadows of the coming night, and the slowly developing stars, all tending to give an indefinable something to the place, which seemed to hold the visitors as in a thrall.

It had been so night after night, with the only drawback to the pleasure in the presence of Señor Ramon, who seemed to be quite at home at the villa, and polite and friendly, to a degree; but whose warmth never seemed to thaw the two Englishmen.

This night, Ramon was absent at his home, a quarter of a league on the other side of the little port; and as soon as the guitar strings had been tuned, Helen sang first one and then another of the old ballads of home, the room growing darker, and the faces of those present more indistinct, till suddenly Redgrave started up as his child's sweet sympathetic voice ceased, the last note of the guitar vibrating in the fragrant air.

'Room's too hot,' said Redgrave huskily.—'Come and have a walk round, Fraser.'

'Poor papa!' said Helen, rising as he left the room, followed by Fraser with unwilling step.

'Is anything wrong?' said Digby, laying his hand upon the guitar, as if in protest.

'It was my mother's favourite song,' said Helen sadly. 'She used to sing it. I remembered the air, and found the words one day in her desk. I sang it to him one evening as a surprise, and his emotion frightened me; but ever since he makes me sing it whenever I take down the guitar. He says it brings him back the past; but it always makes him sad.'

There was a few moments' silence, embarrassing to both. Digby had words rising to his lips which he longed to speak; but he checked them, as he felt that he had no right.

'Let us join them now,' said Helen, trying to draw away the guitar.

'No, no; not yet,' cried Digby. 'One more song—will you?—may I ask you? the little Spanish song I heard you singing that day you were gathering flowers.'

Helen drew her breath so sharply that there was a sound in the darkening room as of a painful sob. Then there was silence as Digby sank back in his chair with a feeling of misery crushing down upon him such as he had never felt before.

'I'm an idiot!' he said to himself. 'What business had I ever to harbour such thoughts? But if it had been another, I should not have cared.'

He knew he was thinking a lie as he seemed to start back into consciousness, for the chords of the guitar rang out in a wild half-minor refrain, and before him he could dimly see Helen on the other side of the room, seated opposite the window, while the sweet pure notes thrilled him through and through.

But the song seemed different now. In place of the vivid greenery of the wood, and the face of the singer looking bright, happy, and surprised in the encounter, everything was dark and oppressive; even the song seemed sad, while it was as if a blow had been struck as the last note rang out and a voice from the window cried 'Brava! brava!' with the addition of hearty plaudits.

Digby sprang to his feet with the hot blood in his cheeks.

'Ah, my dear Señor Digby, I did not know you were there.—Is not Helen's voice delicious?'

Digby tried to speak, but bit his lip with rage, for the words would not come; and Ramon continued: 'Come, señor, confess she sings our Spanish songs in a way which throws yours in the shade?'

'Miss Redgrave's singing is a pleasure to hear,' said Digby coldly.—'Shall we join your father in the garden?'

'Thank you, Mr Digby; not this evening,' said Helen, her voice sounding as if it had caught the inflection of his.

'But you will come, my dear señor,' said Ramon. 'I have brought you a few of my latest-made cigars.'

In the meantime, Redgrave had led the way up a path through his grounds, followed unwillingly by Fraser, to a seat cut in the steep stone, from which they could gaze right away to sea and over the sleeping town.

'Peak looks well to-night,' said Redgrave, pointing to what seemed like a faint cloud where the last rays of the departed day still lingered. 'It's a beautiful world this—a bad world.'

'Paradoxical,' said Fraser dryly.

'Yes, sir. We spoil it, and make it bad.'

There was a long silence, during which they sat and smoked; and from time to time, faintly heard, came the tinkle of Helen's guitar.

'You have been so friendly to us, Mr Redgrave,' said Fraser at last, 'and you seem so isolated'—

'Yes; this is Isola,' said the other with a half-laugh.

'A stranger among strangers, that I take the liberty of speaking,' continued Fraser, without heeding the interruption. 'You are in trouble?'

'To the very eyes, sir.'

'Can I, as a fellow-countryman, help you?'

'No,' said Redgrave shortly.

'I beg your pardon. I meant well.'

'Of course you did, my dear sir, and I thank you; but you can't help me.—I have two great troubles—debt, and my daughter.'

'A curse—and a blessing,' said Fraser dryly.

'Call it so if you like, sir,' cried Redgrave almost fiercely; 'but I owe that Spanish dog more than I can ever pay him. He has led me on in my foolish desire to speculate, tempting me to borrow of him, as if he were my best friend, and I could not see it. I have no means of proving it; but I feel morally certain that he has used his great influence as the richest man in the island to undermine me in my sales. And now he demands payment in full.'

'Well, sir; pay him.'

'I cannot.'

'You have not the means?'

'Yes, I have; but I cannot pay him.'

'May I ask why?'

'Because he will not take money.'

'What do you mean?'

'What did old Shylock insist upon having?'

'His pound of flesh?'

'Yes. I might borrow and pay him; but he insists upon my daughter's hand.'

'Ha!' ejaculated Fraser, as they sat there in the dark.

'And she hates him'—

There was a pause.

'As much as you, sir.'

'Ha!' ejaculated Fraser again.

'There; come back, and join the young folks, Fraser. I feel better, now some one knows my trouble.—Humph! there he is again.' For Ramon's voice was heard speaking loud enough, and directly after the four men encountered.

That night, Ramon and Redgrave walked part of the way back with the two visitors; and after they had parted, Ramon stopped short.

'Good-night,' said Redgrave.

'No, señor; it is not good-night,' said the Spaniard haughtily. 'How long do those English stay here?'

'I don't know; they are their own masters.'

'Yes, Señor Redgrave; and I am yours.—Their presence here displeases me. Let them go.'

He strode away; and as Redgrave walked slowly back, he struck the palm of his left hand a tremendous blow with his fist and said something English—only one word, but it was very English indeed.

CHAPTER IV.

Another fortnight had passed. Excursions had been made along the shore to where the huge billows thundered in. Digby had mastered his antipathy so far as to allow himself to be let down by a rope in company with Fraser to inspect the mummy caves, where, in the most inaccessible spots, the ancient inhabitants of the island buried their dead; and here Fraser had descanted upon facial angles, prognathic jaws, width of cheek-bones, height of forehead, and the like, as he stood before Digby, Hamlet-like, holding an antique skull. Botanical specimens had been procured; geological examples collected, and packed in boxes for transit home; insects had been captured, and duly stuck; and the troglodytes of the island

visited in their cavern villages, where they dwelt dirtily and securely in caves, which were similar to those used in the past by the Guanches as catacombs, being really huge ruptured bubbles formed by volcanic gases in the molten stone, when the great mountain of the interior poured forth in eruption the rock-formed fluid of the interior of the earth. While ever, night after night, as if drawn by a magnet, the two visitors found their way to Redgrave's house, where the master was gravely friendly, as he noted how his child's sad countenance lit up as the familiar footsteps were heard upon the silvery pumice-path.

Ramon raged and stormed. Redgrave forgot his Canary-Spanish education, and grew more English, displaying a bulldog obstinacy.

Then Ramon threatened as he showed his white teeth. 'Mischief may come, my dear Redgrave,' he whispered.

In an instant Redgrave's strong hand gripped him by the shoulder, and his gray eyes flashed fire into the Spaniard's dark orbs. 'Don't try it,' he said fiercely. 'You have an Englishman and a Scot to deal with, sir, and those two together can beat the world, let alone Spain. Read your history, sir, if you don't believe. You Spaniards fight with knives; we Englishmen with our fists. Knives break, fists break too, but they break people's heads. That's metaphorical, Señor Ramon, but there's a good deal of truth in it, all the same. Don't threaten, sir. You've got me down, but I might be dangerous if you tempted me to kick.'

'My dear Redgrave, this is absurd,' said Ramon. 'You misunderstand me. We are the best of friends. I will say no more. We two cannot afford to quarrel. I look upon you as my father, yet to be.'

From that moment Ramon was smiles and good-humour combined. Placid as one of the volcanoes of the island, sleeping and covered by time with grass and flowers, with nothing to tell that they were not pleasant mounds, till a stick was thrust in deeply, and then a faint vapour arose, invisible to the eye, but diffusing an odour of sulphur that was strangely suggestive of heat far down below.

Redgrave was always friendly to the two men, but he made no proposals for trips in the island; he never invited them to come.

'I'll do nothing,' he used to mutter to himself. 'My attempts always fail. I'll leave everything to fate.'

'When are we to have this long-talked-of trip to your works?' said Fraser one evening, when he had been watching angrily the looks which Digby directed at Helen.

'Eh? Ah, when you like,' said Redgrave.

'To-morrow be it then,' said Fraser.

'A trip—a walk?' said Ramon, turning sharply.

'Yes; only to the works.'

'Ah, yes; very interesting.—You will take them to-morrow, Redgrave?'

The latter nodded.

'I wish you a pleasant day.—You will start early, as it is far?'

'Yes. Soon after sunrise.—I shall have everything ready, gentlemen, so be here in good time.'

Ramon smiled to himself as he went away in the best of humour that night, but he smiled too soon.

Redgrave saw it, and he was very thoughtful as he bade his other visitors good-night.

'Nelly, my darling,' he said as they re-entered the house, 'it is very cold up the mountain, and the way there is scorching and dusty; but if I had the side-saddle clapped on one of the mules, you could go with us.'

The sad aspect fled from Helen's face on the instant. 'Ah yes,' she cried.

'That's right,' said her father. 'Then be ready. Thick boots and cloak ready for the cold.'

Helen flung her arms about his neck, and hid her face for a moment in his breast before kissing him and saying 'Good-night.'

'I've seen him smile before,' said Redgrave to himself; 'and it means mischief. As soon as we were out of the way, he would be here pestering my poor girl. Checkmate there.'

'Treacherous enemy at least,' said Ramon, as he returned home.

'Tom,' said Fraser suddenly, as they two walked together down the steep slope.

'Eh? Yes?' said Digby with a start.

'What do you say to getting back to Santa Cruz and trying to catch one of the Castle boats home?'

'No.'

'Eh?'

'I said No. I'm very bad, out of sorts, Horace; and this place is doing me worlds of good. Emphatically, No. Besides, you have not half-done the island yet. You said so the other day.'

'True: I did.'

'Then do it properly while you are here; and don't bother. Why, you are always wanting to go home.'

Fraser's countenance grew more sad as he gazed sidewise at his companion's happy face, and he sighed gently. 'Young—handsome—volatile,' he said to himself; 'and he loves her dearly; while she'—He seemed to have come upon a confused mental tanglement, and it was some minutes after blindly blundering on through a maze of thought, that he said softly: 'Matters are getting in a knot.'

CHAPTER V.

'Going with us—you!' cried Digby as he entered the pretty room at Redgrave's the next morning, to find a delicious breakfast spread, and Helen standing ready to receive him in a riding-habit specially adapted to the place.

'You will not think me in the way?' she said playfully.

Fraser's countenance looked more sombre as he took the hand extended to him, and smiled sadly as he followed Digby's example and expressed his delight.

To both men that day was a dream of a wondrous journey upward along a flower-strown track towards a dense cloud, which soon after enveloped them, and through which they laboriously climbed to find themselves in a new region, where the air was cooler, and fragrant with the odour of the resinous pines through which they passed; and as Digby led Helen's mule, they talked little, but listened to the music of the birds and the gurgle of water, and caught from time to time among the tree-tops glimpses of the dazzling blue sky. They spoke but seldom, but

went on with their eyes fixed upon Fraser and Redgrave, who led the way some fifty yards ahead, but stopped from time to time, for the laggards to overtake them, and admire some fresh view.

And all through that temperate summer zone the birds sung around them; and to Digby they sang only of love, and to Helen of what might be.

But the sadness in her breast suffused her eyes with tears. There was a black shadow always before her; and when, after riding her mule through some rougher part, Digby turned to seek her gaze, she averted it with a sigh, but to own to herself that all this was very sweet, and she knew that she had never before enjoyed a day like this.

The fir-tree zone came to an end; the cool darkness and soft silence of the shady glade gave place to a rugged pumice-strown desert, where fine dust rose at every step, and the sun poured down with blinding power. A weary, weary tramp to some; but to those two who hung behind, a dreamy time of bliss, through which they journeyed on hour after hour, till a wooden hut was reached, where the mule was tethered; and Fraser now, at Redgrave's suggestion, offered his arm to help Helen up a cindery slope to the edge of the mountain crater, the party then descending a hundred feet or so into a hollow, where Fraser forgot everything but the delight he found in gathering specimens of sulphur crystals—pale straw colour, rich yellow, and brilliant scarlet.

'Yes, this is my last venture,' said Redgrave suddenly. 'My men come up here to dig the sulphur, of which there is no end, store it for me in the tent below, and we ship it off home. But you had better not stay long; the sulphur gas comes up strong to-day.'

'What would happen if there was to be an eruption now, Mr Redgrave?' said Digby.

'This party would never know,' was the serious reply.

'Then I wish to goodness Señor Ramon were here, and this party safe at home, if it did blow up,' said Digby in a half-whisper as he glanced at Helen, who shook her head at him sadly; and he saw her eyes fill with tears.

Fraser was a dozen yards away, stooping to pick up yet another crystal, while Redgrave was walking towards him.

'Forgive me,' whispered Digby. 'They were the words of a thoughtless boy.'

Her look said so much that he caught her hand and raised it to his lips, but only got it to be drawn timidly away.

'Well, Fraser, when you're ready,' said Redgrave. 'It's a long way back; the wind's high; the gases bad, and the dust blows. It's very cold too.—Shall we go back?'

Fraser assented; and Digby gave way to him as he came forward to help Helen to climb up the side of the crater to the edge, whence, after a brief gaze round at the glorious view, they all descended to the hut, and partook of the luncheon they had brought. Helen remounted the mule, and Digby took the bridle once more as her father and Fraser went on.

The first part of the descent took place in silence, both Digby and Helen wondering how it

was that they had not noticed that it was bitterly cold, the wind boisterous, and the dust that rose painful and wearying to a degree. They were conscious of nothing save that they were together in an idyllic dream, with a world of beauty spread out below.

Eight thousand feet, they had been told, was the height of the quiescent volcano; but the words had fallen upon deaf ears, for there was a question asking itself at the portals of their hearts: 'How is this to end?'

The sun was getting low in the west as the pine zone upon the mountain was reached; and once more in the dim obscurity they penetrated, everything seemed more dreamy and sweet than ever.

Fraser and Redgrave were well on ahead; the track wound here and there; but dim as the woodland became, the mule was familiar with the way, and paced slowly on with its bridle upon its neck, and Digby walking now with his hand upon the saddle-bow.

Darker and darker it grew, save where the ruddy light of the western sun pierced the garden pine-boughs, and cast strangely lurid rays through the dense forest. And still darker and darker, till a gurgling stream was reached; the mule stopped of its own accord to bend down and drink, and Digby's hand took that which was near his on the pommel of the saddle.

'Helen!' he said, and his voice was a whisper among the pines.

She did not speak; but her hand was timidly resigned to his grasp, and the next moment his arms were about her. 'My darling!' were his words; 'I love you with all a man's first true love!'

There was no reply, a timid shrinking, and with a sob Helen let her head rest upon his shoulder, as if that were the place where she might find safety from the fate that seemed to her worse than death.

There was a strange grating noise, such as might have been made by a frightened bird, but it was caused by ivory gritting and grinding upon ivory.

Digby started round to see dimly, half-a-dozen yards away, Ramon standing by the bole of one of the thickest pines, while a cheery voice ahead shouted back: 'Come, you people; don't lose your way.'

WILD EXMOOR.

It is sweet at times, when the heart is fretted and weary of the conventionalisms of town-life, to seek solace for even a few fleeting days with Nature in her wild beauty. To quote a great writer: 'Welcome, thou great Nature, savage but not false, not unkind, unmotherly—speak thou to me, O mother, and sing my sick heart thy mystic everlasting lullaby song, and let all the rest be far!'

Moved by the burning desire to quit for a brief while the whirl and glare of the city, I went down last spring to wander on Exmoor. It was April, and the woods and hedges were growing tenderly verdant. The cuckoo's note was not yet heard; while the nightingale, for some mysterious reason, never goes so far west. But thrushes

and blackbirds were singing as they never seem to sing later on; and a host of small birds swelled the chorus, amongst them the willow-wren, whose plaintive note every dweller in the country must know: he, like the cuckoo, is one of spring's chief harbingers.

The drive from South Molton to Simonsbath is very beautiful. For the first two or three miles, the road winds through a hilly and thickly-wooded country—a typical Devonshire road, in fact. A sweet little stream brawls noisily along, generally close to the road, while some rich undulating water-meadows delight the eye. Presently we pass by a disused copper mine, and through a quiet hamlet nestling on the confines of the moor itself. The meadows and birch-woods gradually melt away; and, climbing a steep long hill, we breathe a different air, that makes the pulse beat stronger, and the blood circle more freely in the veins. The Moor proper, in its wild desolation and its absolute silence, now opens out before us. Glancing back, we get a magnificent view of South Molton and its neighbourhood, even to hamlets and villages far remote. But the mists of night draw on apace, and we have yet to drive some half-dozen stiff miles before reaching that snug inn at Simonsbath, the *William Rufus*. The snow still lies thick here and there along the roadside, in huge discoloured patches, grimly suggestive of the severity of the past winter. By-and-by a sudden turn of the road brings us in view of the 'Silver Barle.' At this turn, by the way, there is a horrible precipice, with neither wall nor protection of any kind. To be hurled down that gully would seem certain death; and yet our driver, the honest innkeeper, tells how on a dark night, some years ago, a carriage and pair did actually go over, and with no graver casualty to the occupants than a broken collar-bone. The trap, however, was dashed to pieces, and it was a difficult business to extract the terrified horses.

The sound and sight of devious Barle sends a thrill of joy through us, for we have come to fish in this stream, which abounds in trout, more, perhaps, than any of the other moorland streams; though they run very small—six or eight to the pound. Here and there, a monster of half a pound, or even three-quarters, may be taken with worm or fly.

Simonsbath is a little settlement in the midst of the wilds of Exmoor forest. I am referring to Exmoor proper, and not to the district commonly known by this name, which is of wide extent. This place, with its green plantations and few slight buildings, is a little oasis in a wild but beautiful tract; nor do its simple and scanty signs of civilisation harmonise ill with the desolation around. A church, with a few labourers' cottages, an inn, and picturesque old mansion-house; add to these the fir plantations, that afford a shelter from the winter storms, and you have the civilisation of Exmoor complete. More than one attempt has been made to reclaim the forest. Many years ago, a mansion-house on a far more pretentious scale was commenced, but never completed; there it stands to this day, grim and untenanted, save by the starlings, which build there in the spring. Other attempted improvements have failed in the same way: the peat and heather in hill and dale seem to defy the hand

of man, and his little efforts to rob them of their natural grandeur and obdurate ruggedness are quite futile.

Early in the cold bright morning we were up to fish the Barle as far down as Landacre Bridge, or perhaps to wooded Withypool. These upper reaches of the stream between Landacre and Simonsbath are undeniably a little monotonous; one continuous brawl over rocks and stones, with none of those deep mysterious pools so delightful to the angler's heart; nor are there any swift smooth 'runs.' At Withypool, indeed, the Barle alters considerably in aspect, presenting a wide variety of river scenery; deep pools, 'stickles,' and quiet runs. Yet, even at and above Simonsbath, the Barle to my mind is a lovely stream.

It is shining and snowing by fits, and consequently sport is very moderate; but here and there, during the short snow-storms, we pick up a few beautiful troutlets, that rise fearlessly to the fly, a 'March Brown' or 'Blue Upright.' My companions stride on far ahead, leaving me a mile or so of river to fish. But the rise is very slight; for there is no sign as yet of the natural fly on the water, nor is the wind in the right quarter. Nevertheless, left to myself, I find plenty of solace. Passing an old disused copper mine—there are many hereabouts—the place straightway becomes a mine of memories. A solitary shepherd's cottage stands on the hillside within a stone's throw, and here, years back, I recollect as if it were but yesterday asking for a glass of milk. It was a blazing day in August, and I had been fishing the Barle with a college friend from its source to Landacre. The time in those Oxford days was very sunny, for the mists of disappointment and sorrow were as yet afar. Often enough in the intervening years I have longed to revisit Exmoor, and at length, my wish fulfilled, find that the place has lost none of its former fascination. The loneliness of its hills and valleys does not depress me; on the contrary, my spirits are elevated, for the moors seem to contain an elixir of life.

The heather is always beautiful, even before summer, with her lavish hand, has made the hill-sides purple with it, and the stream is ever a companion. At this time of year there is, of course, a scarcity of animal life. A few stone-chats and wheatears, just arrived, chatter and flirt their tails amidst the rocks; and the dipper or water-ousel forces attention by persistently courtesying to you from a boulder in mid-stream. He is a delightful fellow, this dipper, full of quaint sly ways; and by sitting quite still and watching, you may soon learn the ins and outs of his life. He comes and goes briskly from rock to rock, courtesying from every one, and uttering now and then a clear shrill whistle. I have often thought on the contrast between the modes in which man and the lower animals feed. The former has for the most part his stated hours for feeding, and partakes of his food with more or less punctuality. Take, on the other hand, the dipper—he has scarcely a spare moment while there is light, but is continuously seeking for food, earning his bread by the constant sweat of his brow.

Snipe, curlews, and partridges are fairly common on the moors; and that local bird the blackcock is plentiful in the neighbourhood of the Doone

Valley. This year, I saw on Exmoor a species whose presence I had never suspected till then, the ring-ousel, which is also a very local species. Rabbits are plentiful, and, as a consequence, stoats and weasels. Herds of Exmoor ponies run wild; and in the Bagworthy Valley and neighbourhood you may sometimes see that grand animal, the wild red-deer.

There are three streams all rising hard by Simonsbath—the Barle, the Exe, and Bagworthy Water: the last-named, which flows through the Bagworthy Valley, is perhaps the most beautiful; but then, after passing Doone Valley and the idyllic 'waterslide'—rendered classic ground by Blackmore in his *Lorna Doone*—the scenery changes entirely: the wild and treeless moors disappear, and the stream uniting with the Lyn, flows on to the Severn sea through scenes, it is true, of surpassing loveliness, but lacking the stern grandeur of the moorland: past Brendon village, and past Watersmeet, the scene in Whyte Melville's *Katerfelto* of the fierce struggle between Parson Gale and John Garnet: on to Woodside cottage and Lynmouth village, where, as Southey said, the river and the sea 'make but one sound!' Very tender memories these places have for me; but it is to Exmoor I would go when weary for a while of the sounds and sights of city life. A gracious and soothing silence broods over hill and valley, broken only here and there by the brawling of silvery trout stream, and sometimes in the summer by the thunder echoing from hill to hill.

IRONICAL ITEMS.

A CRITIC called irony the wit of a thinker, and humour the irony of a poet. He further likened irony to the sting of a thorn, and humour to the plaster which heals the wound. Irony, like sarcasm and ridicule, is often more effective than argument; in description, is sometimes very telling; and may convey suggestions and ideas in a terse and pithy manner, as when one says: 'You can't always judge by appearances: the man who wears a diamond pin may be really wealthy.' A witty Frenchman writes in a Paris newspaper that a French major is a man who has three decorations: the third was given him because he had two, the second because he had one, and the first because he had none. A well-known cardinal says a gentleman is one who never inflicts pain. On which a wit remarks: 'This is hard on the dentists.'

Not a bad story is told of an aged clergyman who met a man loudly declaiming against foreign missions. 'Why,' asked the objector, 'doesn't the Church look after the heathen at home?'—'We do,' said the clergyman quietly, and gave the man a tract.

'What's going on inside?' inquired a gentleman of the ticket-seller at the entrance to a public hall. 'An amateur performance,' replied the latter.—'The audience seem to be having a good time; I heard their shouts of laughter four blocks away. What's the play?'—'*Hamlet*,' was the unexpected reply.

The slowness or unpunctuality of trains is a fertile topic for wits to exercise their powers thereon. A man was waiting once for the train

at a roadside station where passengers at times have to test greatly their stock of patience. He saw a graveyard not far from the station very full of graves, and he inquired the reason. A bystander calmly informed him that it was used to bury passengers who died while waiting for the train. Stations and trains bring to mind the Mugby Junction style of sandwiches, which have roused the wrathful irony and sarcasm of so many travellers. It is stated that a ham sandwich has been dug out of the ruins of Pompeii in a perfect state of preservation. When tasted, it was pronounced to be very similar to those to be got at the railway refreshment rooms.

'That was a mysterious robbery the other day,' said Smith to Jones.—'Why, I don't see what mystery there was about it,' remarked Jones; 'the detectives caught the thieves the same day.'—'Yes,' returned the first speaker; 'that's what I said.'

'So far as you saw,' said a counsel to a witness, 'she was doing her ordinary household duty?'—'I should say so—she was talking,' was the ironical reply. A woman's weakness for talking, and her helplessness in the little matters of directing missiles and pointing lead pencils, form never-failing subjects of ridicule for the rougher sex.

'He never had but one genuine case in his life,' said a lawyer of a rival, 'and that was when he prosecuted his studies.'—Some lawyers have had curious experiences of ironical wills. There is the not unfamiliar case of the French merchant who left a handsome legacy to a lady who had refused to marry him twenty years before, in gratitude for her kindness in not taking him at his word.

There is a good deal of pointed satire in such ironical facetiæ as the following. We are reminded that the mania for adulteration is so great, that you can't buy a quart of sand and be sure that it is not half sugar.—A resident in a suburban villa was recently asked how his house had fared during a snowstorm. 'Oh, badly,' was the reply; 'my cistern is the only dry place in it.'—Some good wholesome advice may thus be conveyed to careless householders. They will please note that the most effectual method of discovering a gas-escape on their premises is to hunt for it by the light of a naked candle until they find it.—'What would civilisation be without a piano?' asked a philosopher. 'Among other things, it would be able to sleep at nights, besides being a thoughtless unhappy by day,' replied a writer.—'Wot'll I do with this burglar alarm, Bill; take it along?' asks burglar number one. Second burglar: 'Yes; slip it in the bag; we can get something for it.'—'I have called on the recommendation of a friend,' said a gentleman, 'to have my portrait painted. But I should like to know if you can take me in my fur coat?' 'Oh, certainly,' replied the artist. 'Fact is, you know, I am an animal painter.'

Irony has a good share in women's spiteful little speeches about one another. These remarks were exchanged between two friends: 'Do you know that little Mrs B—— pretends to be a collector of antiquities? You don't believe she really has any, do you?'—'Oh yes; her certificate of birth, to begin with,' was the ironical remark.

Ungallant comments upon the fair sex furnish many ironical items. As the majority of humor-

ous press-writers are, as A. Ward would say, of the male persuasion, it gives them daily opportunities of making sly hits of this description without much chance of retaliation. A writer has noticed that nothing makes a woman laugh so much as a new set of teeth. Six women can talk all at once and get along first-rate, and no two men can do that. A woman can throw a stone with a curve that would be a fortune to a bowl-player. Woman's greatest glory is her hair, and she should be very economical of it, says a cynic, when she is cooking. But the women do not always come off second best. A lady stood hanging on to the strap of a tramcar, when a workman in the far corner arose and politely offered her his seat. 'I thank you,' she said in a very sweet tone; 'but I dislike to deprive the only gentleman in the car of his seat.'

The troubles of matrimony are a never-failing subject for the fellow of infinite jest who exercises his wit in the following fashion. 'Joy never kills,' remarked Dobbin's mother-in-law to him the other morning. 'Possibly not,' he replied quietly; 'but please don't experiment on me by going elsewhere to live.'—When you see a couple in the street, if the man carries the bundles, they are engaged; if the woman carries the bundles, they are married.

THE CIVILISED BURMAN.

THE native inhabitants of the larger Burmese towns include amongst their number a considerable proportion of what, in contradistinction to the more ignorant jungle-folk, may be called 'civilised' Burmans, whose intercourse with Europeans naturally does much towards shaping the destinies of the rising generation. An English education is the stepping-stone to advancement in that country, as it is in all our dependencies. No one is more alive to this than the ambitious young Burman, who therefore regards his entry at an English school and introduction to 'A B C' as the first rung of the ladder by which he is to climb to success. Success to him does not imply wealth, for he seems not to appreciate the value of money, as do other eastern races. If a trader makes a big *coup* over a transaction in timber or paddy, no matter how much elaborate care and thought have been bestowed on the business to bring it to an issue, he spends the profits as soon as they come into his hands, without an idea of laying them up for the proverbial rainy-day. He builds a monastery or pagoda, or adds another to the innumerable rest-houses to be found upon every roadside in Burma. Such application of his means ensures him the respect of his friends in this world, and an easy conscience wherewith to start upon his journey to the next.

Vanity is the keynote to the Burmese character, and a fond parent despatches his son to the care of a school in Rangoon, or even to a college in Calcutta, reminding him of the 'government situation' which is the bright horizon to his career at school. To the youthful Burmese mind government employ conveys a vague meaning of authority and power; and without any idea of the special department of state in which he would prefer to exercise his talents, he embarks on the voyage of life, having before him a silver but

misty cloud whose shades veil appointments not extravagantly paid, but which guarantee to the holder the deference and obsequious civility of all around him.

Prior to his admission to the English school, he has received at the Phoongyee's hands the customary teaching in his mother-tongue. Once settled down, the boy leads much the same existence as a lad at one of our own large middle-class schools. He learns his lessons, or leaves them unlearned to make acquaintance with the cane; gets into scrapes in class and out of class; helps himself to the neighbours' mangoes, and learns to play football. How he does the latter with his bare feet would astonish a Rugby-bean. Sometimes he does wear boots, but they clog his movements, and unless he is playing with English or Eurasian boys, he soon discards them, and punishes the leather unflinchingly with his upturned toes. I have never been able to discover what 'rules' they play in Burma. They resemble those of Eton more than any others, with the marked difference, that it appears quite allowable to pick up the ball by the lace and give any opponent within reach a whack over the head with it.

The student remains at school for five or six years, and emerges from its gates with a good sound knowledge of English, reading, writing, and arithmetic. If he does not intend to try the examinations which would decide his fitness for government service, his tutor supplies him with recommendations to assist him in finding the employment his accomplishments qualify him to seek in business or trade.

Perhaps his friends have 'interest,' and are able to get him some subordinate post in the public service which fulfils the object of his ambition without entailing the toils of competitive test for a higher appointment. But whether he becomes a government official through influence or his own merits does not affect the great reality, that he is thenceforth a social centre in his own small world. He can assume those airs of superiority the conceited Burman so loves to wear, accepting with gracious condescension the respectful flattery of his neighbours. He is expected to pose as a magnate, and it is not his nature to disappoint his friends in this. What a grand thing it is, to be sure! To sit in an English chair under a punkah—it looks well to have a punkah irrespective of the state of the thermometer—and listen with dignified attention to the reports of subordinates, who kneel round in ostentatious humility with carefully hidden feet. To receive in their presence big official-looking envelopes from the *chuprassies*, whose coloured belts and brasses like oval door-plates proclaim the source of their important errands. To walk home through the streets in English shoes and socks, in which he is painfully cramped and awkward, whilst the children make way for him, and their parents stand hoping for the distinction his smile of recognition will confer. No wonder the Burman's earthly paradise is officialdom. He is intimate with the English Assistant-commissioner; when the Deputy-commissioner of the district makes his periodical visit, the native official is by virtue of his position the mouthpiece and responsible spokesman of his neighbours. For him, too, there is the chance of presentation

to the Lord Chief-commissioner on some great occasion at Rangoon Government House, when, dressed in the whitest of cotton jackets and the stiffest of gaudy silk *putsoes*, he will be commended by the chief of the province as that trustworthy and deserving officer, the Myooke of Kyouk-choungyee, or some other jungle-place with a name as musical as it is unknown. This presentation, taking place as it does before all the English ladies and gentlemen, as well as his fellow-officials, is an event to be remembered and talked about; and the simple village folk are awed by the flight to which their distinguished friend has flown.

There is, moreover, another possibility before the diligent native officer—far away, indeed, and so beautiful that he can hardly think of it save as a dream—a Decoration! He knows at least one Burmese official who received the great English title, 'Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire.' True, he is not very clear what it means; but is there not a wonderful star and ribbon to explain it? It is a daring hope for him to entertain, but still there is no knowing what may happen in these stirring times, and perhaps some day, when he is an old man himself, he may come in for a title too. Only last Queen's birthday the Decoration Angel winged its lustrous way over the province, where expectant men held their breath and watched its course with uplifted eyes. Grand and sonorous were some of the names bestowed upon the elect in Mandalay. There are glad beings in the Golden City who can write themselves 'Bearers of golden swords' and 'Bearers of silver swords.' Is not this something to have lived for? Has not the man who crowns his labours with such a halo triumphed indeed?

The vast majority of the crowds of youths who pass through the English schools are fain to content themselves with clerkships in the Secretariat, Departmental offices, or the courts. Failing these, they obtain situations in merchants' offices, which, though well paid, do not hold out the dazzling promises the more coveted career owes its chief attraction to.

The lad who leaves school at the age of nineteen or twenty, having neither 'interest' nor inclination for further study, makes up his mind to be a clerk, and 'goes into business.' He begins as a volunteer, and serves for a time without salary, proving himself worthy of engagement as a regular clerk. A trustworthy useful man may earn as much as two hundred or two hundred and fifty rupees a month, so the beginner does not grudge the time he is called upon to give without remuneration at first. During his probation he learns business habits, punctuality, and practises his handwriting. He takes out the pay he does not get, in ink and stationery, of which he consumes vast quantities in experimental calligraphy. From his own point of view, so far as we have been able to judge, his duties chiefly are: to look busy whether he is occupied or not; to learn the art of keeping his cheroot alight without detection when a superior visits his desk; to watch the older *kiranies* (clerks), and be prompt in leaving the office at five o'clock. He varies these rudimentary labours by copying the letters and papers his fellow-clerks obligingly place at his disposal when

inclined for a little rest or quiet recreation themselves.

After five or six months, you will find one morning on your table a laboriously constructed envelope of imposing size, addressed to you as 'Manager' or 'Superintendent' of the firm you serve. This contains a petition from the volunteer couched in the orthodox style. It represents with what diligence he has toiled in your honour's office without pay; dwells on the difficulty he finds in maintaining his wife and little children upon nothing at all; points out the advantages the retention of his services must confer upon you, not him; and concludes with a confused dual prayer for your honour's eternal good health and a salary of, say, fifty rupees per month.

The writer, you may be sure, is waiting outside, engaged in eager telegraphic communication with the punkah-puller, who, from his coign of vantage in front of you, is able to notify when the missive receives attention. The head-clerk is summoned, and gives evidence regarding the progress and talents of the petitioner: his opinion on the whole is favourable, so you call him in and offer him an 'agreement' for two years on a salary of twenty rupees a month, qualified by power to dismiss him if necessary. The boy clasps his hands and turns beseechingly to the head-clerk; but he has been through it all too often, and judiciously looks the other way. Twenty rupees a month! He hastily presses on your memory that he has 'a wife and little children.' 'If you please, sir,' he begins; but language fails him; and you take the opportunity of reminding him kindly but firmly that you can only pay him what his services are worth, irrespective of the size of a family, which at his age he has no business to possess at all. The argument is lost upon him, and he retires, thoughtfully repeating to himself the terms he has been offered, to report the result of his petition and interview to his friends outside. A long and earnest debate is usually terminated by his decision to accept the offer; and he returns to announce the fact to you, which he does with a suspicion of forgiving reproach. Thereafter, he returns to his desk, and having procured a new pen, devotes the remainder of the day to transcribing his 'agreement' from a stereotyped form, of the meaning of which he has but the vaguest conception.

An intelligent Burman makes an excellent clerk if he is carefully managed. He is fairly accurate, very neat, and sometimes methodical. If left to himself, he goes on his way in plodding contentment, and so long as he has plenty to do and his task is not above his capacity, he wants little attention from those over him. The older men look after the juniors, and generally set an example of steadiness and good behaviour. He is very conservative, and will remain with his employers until age and decrepitude compel him to retire, if his salary, regarding which he is not extremely exacting, is enough to keep him in comfort. He cannot, however, endure harshness or scoldings; and if the youthful *kiranie's* doings bring them frequently upon him, he will one day be missing from his place, whilst a fellow-clerk brings the simple explanation that 'he does not wish to come any more.' Such a resignation, we

may observe, is generally sent in on the day following that upon which his month's wages have been paid.

The Burman marries very early in life; he regards matrimony as a positive duty, to be entered upon as soon as he has settled employment, if, indeed, he has not taken a wife before then. The pair reside with the parents of the bride for a year or two after marriage, whether the husband is earning a livelihood or not. The wife continues to keep her fruit or sweet-stuff stall in the bazaar, but more for occupation than profit; though she is a remarkably good hand at driving a bargain with a stingy customer. The Burmese woman possesses a firm will and an excellent temper, and when the time comes for a young couple to set up an establishment of its own, she makes a model housekeeper. Not until then does she abandon the wicker stool and big brass tray which formed the stall and held the stock-in-trade she used to carry to the bazaar every morning. Now, she is above that sort of thing; but her instincts are still commercial, so she opens a shop and fills it with the wonderful collection of miscellanies in which the small Burmese trader generally deals. Here she sits all day, smoking, chatting with the neighbours, petting the children, and rolling cheroots for sale.

The variety of races which form the population of the seaport towns is a curious tribute to the thrift of the country. Europeans of every nation, Americans, Chinese, Armenians, Negroes, and representatives of almost every Indian people between the Himalayas and Ceylon, find a home there; and the children of the soil dwell amongst them on the best of good terms with all. The Chinaman, who prospers there even better than he seems to do everywhere else, is glad to get a Burmese wife. Her ways appeal to his business-like nature; and though he will work twenty hours out of the twenty-four, seven days in the week, 'for his own hand,' it is convenient to have a partner whom he can trust to do as well as he could himself, when he wants a rest. The boys of such a pair are educated and dressed as Chinamen, and the girls as Burmese!

The European who settles in the country often takes a daughter of the land as the wife of his bosom; so does the Armenian. So would the native of India, if he found favour in the ladies' sight. The wealthier Suratis do find such favour sometimes; but the native has ever in his mind's eye the home of his youth, to which he will retire to pass the evening of his life, and the Burmese girl will not leave her country.

Education does little to lead the Burman astray in matters connected with dress, and the utmost alteration he indulges in is the substitution of shoes and stockings for sandals. A recent edict permits wearers of the former to retain them in court, &c., and some of the younger officials take advantage of the rule.

By nature enterprising in gastronomical matters, education and opportunity encourage the Burman to explore the contents of those inviting 'tins' which are within the reach of every one who lives in town. The man who can master the 'Directions for Use' might be fairly expected to exercise some little discretion in applying them. But the Burman passes them by, and devours preserved oysters, jam, and Swiss milk in astonishing quan-

ties with a placid disregard of possible results which is entirely his own. Ice is another product of civilisation which he appreciates highly, and he is a staunch supporter of the factories which supply this necessary. Ask one of your clerks if his distorted visage argues a broken lower jaw, and he will dive head first under his desk, reappearing with the smiling explanation, 'Only ice, sir,' to disabuse your mind of the impression that you have caught him chewing the objectionable betel-nut in the office.

Although the inhabitant of the town loses much of his simplicity, he retains all his childishness. He affects to despise the country-people—'sons of the jungle,' to translate his own term literally; but nevertheless he cannot lay claim to the more manly qualities which gain the district villagers the better opinion of Europeans.

The unconquerable indolence of the Burman disqualifies him for competition with the foreigners, who monopolise all but the interior trade of the country. He has reaped less advantage from civilisation than he ought to have done, and seems quite content to be elbowed aside by strangers so long as his personal comfort is not interfered with. Like one of his own sacred images, he sits with idle hands whilst the dogs and crows scramble for the offerings a bountiful nature has placed before him. Happy in the present, for which he wants little, and careless of the future, which may be trusted to provide for itself, the Burman finds more enjoyment in life than those who pass their existence in a breathless race for the wealth he does not care to contend for; but as his acme of happiness is to be perfectly idle, it is obvious that in a country where famine is unknown and charity is inculcated as the noblest of virtues, it is not difficult to satisfy him.

'TOO LATE.'

'THERE was nothing in the story!' Thus the people said;
But they load her name with glory,
Now that she is dead!

'Were the verses worth the reading?' Hush! she wrote for bread.
Every line seems full of pleading,
Now that she is dead!

Weary fingers, temples throbbing,
Heart that weighed as lead,
Eyelids used to slumber-robbing,
Ah! and now she's dead!

O ye people, how your scorning
Filled her soul with dread!
'Let me sleep,' she moaned; and morning
Came, and found her dead!

Kindly judge, then, those who, living,
In her footsteps tread.
Praises, too late in the giving,
Come but to the dead!

FLORENCE SIMSON.

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